



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

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### Specialty Crop Grants to Aid Programs Promoting Massachusetts-Grown Apples, Cranberries, Flowers and More

BOSTON – Programs to promote Massachusetts-grown flowers, highlight the health benefits of cranberries, create an Internet marketing program for local apple growers, and develop a new “culinary tourism” initiative are among projects recently funded by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) through a federal Specialty Crop Block Grant.

Supported by the US Department of Agriculture, the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is designed to advance specialty crops (all crops except “commodities” such as grain and soybeans) through means such as research, marketing, trade enhancement, food safety and security, plant health programs, education, “buy local” programs, improved efficiency, environmental conservation, and product development. The DAR this month awarded grants totaling \$107,596 to the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers’ Association, Massachusetts Flower Growers Association, New England Apple Association, and the New England Departments of Agriculture Harvest New England Initiative. Also funded was a new culinary tourism program within DAR.

“I am pleased to announce these specialty crop awards, which will fund programs to boost the competitiveness of the Massachusetts agricultural industry,” Acting DAR Commissioner Scott Soares said.

Specialty Crop Block Grant awards announced today include:

- \$42,096 for a **Culinary Tourism Initiative** within the DAR, in conjunction with the Massachusetts Agricultural Tourism Program, to promote farmers and chefs who are utilizing local specialty crops;
- \$20,500 for the **Cape Cod Cranberry Growers’ Association Healthy Benefits Initiative** to develop multi-media materials that document the health benefits of

cranberries, explain the daily intake necessary to obtain these benefits, and provide recipes;

- \$20,000 for the **Massachusetts Flower Growers Association Consumer Awareness Initiative** to promote locally-grown flower products statewide through an informational website for consumers and commercial buyers, and expansion of the “Love My Garden” contest;
- \$20,000 for the **New England Apple Association’s E-Commerce for Massachusetts Apple Growers** program that will develop links on major Internet search engines for those seeking information about locally-grown apples;
- \$5,000 for the **New England Departments of Agriculture Harvest New England Initiative** to support and promote an ongoing project that encourages the purchase and use of New England agricultural products by retailers and consumers.

“This program will help us promote the unique health and wellness benefits of cranberries, and assist us in promoting the versatility and year-round appeal of Massachusetts’ number one food crop,” said Cape Cod Cranberry Growers’ Association Executive Director Jeffrey LaFleur. “We are excited to share with consumers the power of this little red berry, by providing recipes and cooking demonstrations.”

“The Specialty Crops grant will enable Massachusetts growers and the New England apple industry to greatly expand their presence on the Internet. In this rapidly-growing, but still relatively new arena for commerce, we need to develop dynamic new ways to link consumers with our orchards and their products,” added Russell Powell, executive director of the Hatfield-based New England Apple Association. “The Specialty Crops grant will allow us to publicize more and better information about apples in more places than ever before. We’re excited by the potential of this initiative and can’t wait to get started.”

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